

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

December 16, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. HENRY KISSINGER  
FROM: THE PRESIDENT

Here are some further reflections on your briefing today, Saturday, having in mind the need to strengthen the portions which might be interpreted as meaning that we were willing to go along with the present pace of negotiations without taking some action to stop the ominous enemy buildup, an action that would bring the negotiations to a quicker conclusion.

Since October 8th and since you made your "peace is at hand" statement, we have been patiently trying to work out technical details so that there will be no misunderstandings. The clarifications and changes that we have insisted upon have had only one purpose--after a very long war we don't want to end it with a settlement which will bring only a short peace.

But now the remaining differences can be settled within the matter of a few hours by an exchange of messages between the two sides and without a further meeting, provided there is a serious intent on both sides to negotiate a real and lasting peace rather than to try to gain some advantage which will enable one side or the other to renew the war.

We have been talking with the enemy for over four years. During that four years \_\_\_\_\_ thousand Americans, North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese have lost their lives. The time has come now to bring the talking and the war to an end. Reluctantly you would have to say that, for the past 30 days, the way the other side has gone up the hill and down the hill on various proposals would indicate a filibuster rather than a serious intent to reach a settlement and end the fighting.

We want a rapid settlement for three basic reasons.

First, from a personal standpoint, our POWs--we want the release of our POWs, some of whom have been incarcerated for over five (or six) years.



Second, we want to stop the fighting because, while our U.S. casualties are minimal with several weeks in which there have been no killed in action, South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese are dying in battle by the thousands every week.

And third, we want a settlement now because we will not tolerate allowing the peace talks to be used as a cover for a military buildup which could mean a step up in the war in the future.

Both the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese must share responsibility for the delay in reaching a settlement. Each side wants to gain advantages at the peace table it has not and cannot gain on the battlefield. It is time to have the ceasefire and let the people of South Vietnam decide at the ballot by their votes what kind of government they want for South Vietnam. It is time (pick this up from the previous memorandum) that we move this conflict from the battlefield to the ballot box.

Consequently, we are going to step up our pressure on both sides for a faster settlement. In taking this course, we are doing it in the interests of both sides. Neither side can gain from continuing the war--from prolonging the war. Neither side can gain from prolonging the peace talks. We are ready to resume the talks and to reach a rapid settlement whenever the enemy is ready to do so.

In the meantime, the President will continue to order whatever actions he considers necessary by air and sea to prevent what now appears to be an ominous buildup in North Vietnam for the purpose of launching a new offensive against South Vietnam.